

Michigan Cooperative Directors Report February 2012

The Cooperative Directors commissioned William Schroer to conduct a research survey of Michigan's public libraries to determine if the types and levels of services cooperatives provide are meeting their needs. Here are the survey findings.

There was a positive participation in this study with almost 65% of the Cooperative membership participating. There was a good cross-section of members participating as well with representation from all classes of Libraries represented. While the sample size is quite robust as a proportion of the universe (total of 384 libraries) when broken into 6 unequal parts (Class size) or 9 unequal parts (Cooperative membership) the numbers are often too small to provide statistically significant results by class size or membership. Wherever possible we do indicate statistically significant results and also indicate trend lines or "tendencies" which may not be statistically significant at a high confidence interval but bear watching and may suggest more than a casual relationship.

Interestingly, all Library Cooperatives are seen as not alike and as noted in the report, some are comprised of a mix of library class sizes while others are made up of mostly larger...or mostly smaller libraries. This suggests that Library Cooperatives in Michigan may have difficulty comparing themselves to each other or establishing some universal rules, guidelines, processes or other standardized approaches because, fundamentally, they are made up of some very different sized libraries with some very different needs and interests.

In spite of these differences there are some common findings in the report....one of which is an extremely high level of concurrence regarding the 90% "about right" score attributed to the "level of communications" received by library members from the Cooperatives. This high level of endorsement by a strong majority of members would suggest the current schedule for communicating with libraries by the Cooperatives is appropriate and reflects current demand of the members.

Additionally, respondents provided a similar high score regarding the communication of important or "need to know" communications. Again, the strong showing, seen across the board by respondents from different class size libraries, suggest an overall satisfaction with the content of Cooperative communications.

While respondents also agreed overall the opportunity for input was high, smaller libraries emphasized this more than larger class size libraries did. While the finding may not be statistically significant the trendline appears clear and this finding may suggest some additional dialogue with larger library staff to determine how further input may be provided to the Cooperatives.

The plurality of respondents could not suggest what else the Cooperatives could do to keep members more informed. Based on earlier scores it does not appear that is an area of concern for

most respondents. The verbatim responses tend to reinforce this conclusion with comments suggesting a relatively high level of satisfaction with current Cooperative efforts in this area. It may be incumbent upon the Cooperatives to experiment with different delivery mechanisms (i.e. Facebook, Twitter, Google Calendar or other techniques such as an e-zine) to determine what additionally the Cooperatives might do to keep members up to date with latest relevant library information.

Quality of training and effectiveness of training received a B+ score of 5.58/5.71 out of 7.0. While members appear generally satisfied it appears larger libraries may be somewhat less satisfied. This was especially noted when analyzing satisfaction levels by FTE size. While not statistically significant the trend would suggest a lower level of satisfaction with larger libraries (libraries with more FTEs) on this issue. There were also some differences by Cooperative, however, the confidence level on these differences is not adequate to suggest a meaningful trend. Additional dialogue or follow up research with members and especially with the larger library members specifically regarding quality and effectiveness of training may be helpful.

As noted in the text, there is a high positive correlation between opportunity for input and satisfaction with training. This suggests insuring all Cooperative members have adequate input (and feedback) regarding training to increase the opportunity for satisfaction in the selection and provision of training opportunities.

Respondents provided suggestions for improvements to training including the “number of offerings” and “webinars”. Other suggestions include developing a database of presenters that libraries could hire for in-service days and more iterations of training. While there are practical problems providing multiple iterations of training there may be opportunities for responding to member concerns. Because training appears to be a significant concern for members the development of (if it doesn’t exist now) a Training subcommittee made up of member and Cooperative staff could be helpful in providing some creative solutions.

Respondents offered suggestions for training topics including several mentions of “Customer Service”. Perhaps importantly, a mechanism to encourage the ongoing input of members regarding training topics (part of the Training subcommittee agenda?) appears to be something that would be helpful to guide the training content of the Cooperatives.

The top valued services are the Delivery/RIDES and the “group purchases of databases” and “advocacy” followed by “continuing education”. Least valued services include Web Hosting and Research/Development. These scores are largely reinforced when “Services willing to pay for” scores are reviewed. While there are some differences the same top three services appear in the services one would most be willing to pay for. While there are some differences by Class Size or Cooperative membership, the strength of these scores and preferences largely transcend Class Size or Membership.

The delivery of materials questions provided insight which suggests a number of libraries are receiving materials less often than may be desired. The most frequent requested change was libraries with 2 per week deliveries going to 3 per week. For the most part larger libraries wanted more deliveries per week, but this was not a universal finding and it does depend on the library.

There was even a marginal increase in the number of libraries wishing to go to 5 deliveries per week.

Respondents endorsed the overall value of Cooperatives with almost ½ scoring the Cooperatives as a “Very High Value” and another 37% scoring a “High Value”. Perceived effectiveness of training is highly correlated with perceived value of the Cooperative and the smaller libraries were more likely to also rate the Cooperatives highly. Consideration may be given to heightening perceived effectiveness of training as a tool for increasing perceived value and focusing on the needs of larger libraries to insure the Cooperatives are meeting the expectations held by the larger library members of the Cooperatives.

There is not a consensus on the application of all State Aid dedicated to Cooperatives alone. As noted in the text, there are mixed views. Some libraries are more dependent on the State Aid than others...and many are concerned about the economy and more potential downside. It does appear a majority of the Library members could support the proposal if there was a clear demonstration the Cooperatives could provide as much or more value of the State Aid being requested back to the member libraries. In effect, if the Cooperatives could demonstrate a \$1.50 worth of demanded value for every \$1 in State Aid members give up, there is an opportunity for the membership to consider the proposal seriously.

The Cooperatives are seen as a “reliable source” for best practices and for Library News and Issues by ¾ of respondents. There is some difference by Class Size with larger libraries scoring the Cooperatives somewhat lower. There is a positive correlation between the amount of communications and the score received regarding perception as a reliable source. The Cooperatives are seen as somewhat less of a source for Library Finance Information. Continued emphasis on communications and dialoguing with larger libraries to better understand any special needs they may have regarding best practices are recommended. Additionally, the Cooperatives may want to build more robustness into their Library Finance information to encourage the continued perception of the Cooperatives as reliable sources for best practice.

The future direction for Cooperatives is seen as somewhat different by most respondents with an emphasis on technology/support, discounts, advocacy and training leading the way. Marketing and consulting are less valued...perhaps because of the need for those services to be so tightly configured around the circumstances of the individual library. There are some differences by Class Size but these are differences between preferences among the top choices noted above. In effect, these areas do appear to be the consensus areas of preference for the Cooperatives for the near to mid-term as seen by Cooperative members.

In summary, this report suggests Cooperatives are doing a number of things right. Their level of communications, quality of communications and training and other aspects of the service delivery focus are highly rated and valued. There do exist opportunities for training changes in delivery and content as well as opportunities for input...especially with larger size members. Although members appear satisfied with communications content and delivery it may be incumbent upon the Cooperatives to continue to find new approaches which respond even more favorably to member needs. Training content is an opportunity and mechanisms which encourage a greater dialogue between the Cooperatives and members is encouraged. Training

suggestions for improvement must be mediated by cost efficiency and effectiveness and the delegation of some of the suggested ideas to a special committee may facilitate progress. There are some clear preferences for some services and some services appear clearly unnecessary and not desired. Using the information contained here to trim unneeded services will allow the Cooperatives to better allocate resources to what members demand most. There is an opportunity for shifting the frequency of materials to selected libraries and that flexibility appears to be key to meeting specific member needs. The State Aid question is a challenge but there appears room for additional discussion and demonstration by the Cooperatives of how such a proposal might make sense for the greatest majority of members. Overall, the Cooperatives are highly valued service providers serving as a reliable source and providing demanded services. With continued attention to the differences in member needs, remaining flexible regarding the look and feel of services in the future and retaining a service orientation Cooperatives may continue to be seen and viewed as an integral and valued part of the Library services delivery spectrum in Michigan. The complete survey (details and charts) is available at: <http://woodlands.lib.mi.us/handbook/survey.pdf>

Detroit Public Library: On December 20, 2011, Governor Snyder approved HB 4932, the bill to amend 1977 PA 89 entitled "State aid to public libraries act", by amending section 6 (MCL 397.556), as amended by 2005 PA 30. The amended bill modifies the population requirement to 600,000 for designation as a cooperative board of an existing library system.

Midwestern Michigan Library Cooperative: MMLC hosted a Millage Nuts and Bolts Workshop on February 2, 2012 that was attended by over 70 library directors and trustees. It was open to all libraries in Michigan and attracted participants from eight different cooperatives around the state. The MMLC Summer Reading Program schedule was completed at the end of December. . Twenty-six libraries in MMLC and Northland Cooperatives have booked "edutainers" to present 373 educational programs (an increase of 40 over last year) during the school year and over the summer at their public library. This effort encourages students to read as a member of their library's book club with the goal of retaining their grade appropriate reading level between school years. All MMLC public library members submitted State Aid Reports for FY2011-12 as required by the Library of Michigan. New cooperative member representative Sarah Prielipp, Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe Library Director, was introduced at the February Advisory Council meeting.

White Pine Library Cooperative: We are using the recent survey results to start planning for the next Plan of Service. The White Pine Facebook page is up and running.